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## **STATEMENT**

**on**

**Governor's Bill No. 6845: An Act Implementing the Budget Recommendations of the Governor Concerning Higher Education.**

**Connecticut General Assembly  
Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee  
March 12, 2015**

The MetroHartford Alliance serves as the region's economic development leader and the City of Hartford's Chamber of Commerce. Our investors include businesses of all sizes, health care providers, arts and higher education institutions as well as the municipalities of North Central Connecticut. Our mission is to ensure that the region competes aggressively and successfully for jobs, capital, and talent so that it thrives as one of the country's premier places for all people to live, play, work, and raise a family.

The MetroHartford Alliance regularly hears from businesses and organizations facing workforce challenges as they struggle to fill vacant positions with qualified employees. These concerns have been reinforced by a February 2015 study by Connecticut's Planning Commission for Higher Education which found that while Connecticut's population is comparatively well-educated, it is not educated to sufficiently high levels to meet the skilled workforce needs in the future. It is critical for Connecticut to have both a strong public sector of higher education and to also support our residents that attend private colleges. To that end, we encourage you not to exclude Connecticut students that attend Connecticut private colleges from the Governor's Scholarship Program, the state's need-based financial aid program.

Private colleges are one of Connecticut's greatest assets. Every year these highly productive institutions graduate thousands of students – potential future employees – in the areas needed most: health services, computer science and engineering. Further, Connecticut's private colleges are some of our largest employers and most committed partners - investing in both our communities and our students. Eliminating private colleges from the state-supported financial aid program is contrary not only to the findings of the Planning Commission but also to the progress needed to develop a skilled workforce that will help our state's economy to thrive.

As noted in the Planning Commission's report, "Private institutions, both not-for-profit and for-profit, are major contributors to the education of Connecticut citizens, the preparation of the state's workforce, and the fabric of the communities in which they are located." While the Alliance certainly recognizes the budgetary challenges our state faces, we ask that you consider the fact that our state's ability to retain jobs, create new employment opportunities and strengthen our economy is inextricably linked to a skilled, educated workforce.

We appreciate the opportunity to submit this testimony and encourage the members of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee to amend Governor's Bill No. 6845 in order to include Connecticut students attending Connecticut private colleges in the Governor's Scholarship Program.